War in the Western Theater

Favorite Stories and Fresh Perspectives
from the Historians at Emerging Civil War

Edited by

Sarah Kay Bierle & Chris Mackowski

The Emerging Civil War Series

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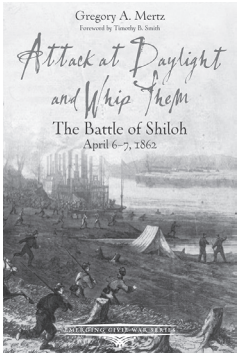

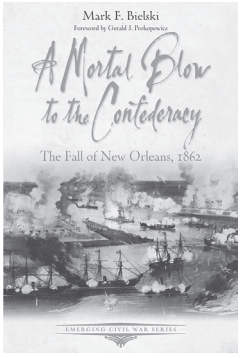

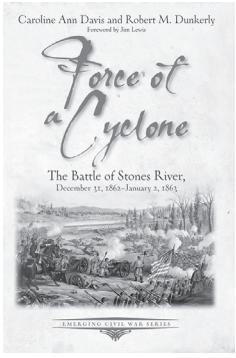

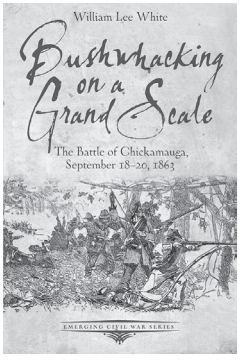

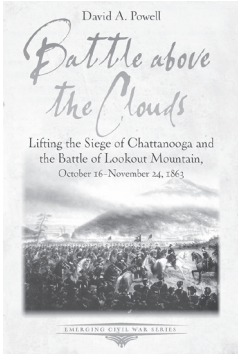

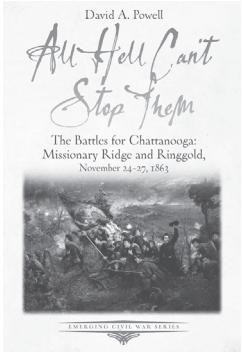

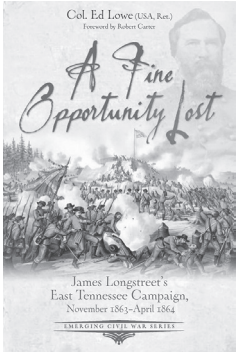

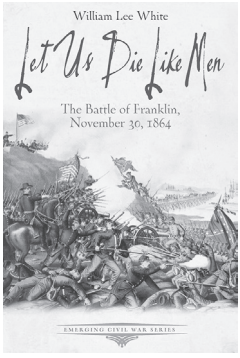

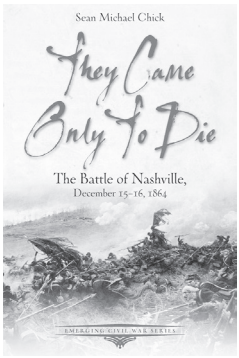

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Sarah:
To Mark and Cheryl Schoenberger.
You are some of my dearest friends in the "far west,"
and your stories of exploring battlefields
and re-enacting in the actual Western Theater
always bring joy.

Chris:
With thanks to my friends at El Patron Mexican Restaurant
in Spotsylvania Court House,
where I spent many enjoyable afternoons
editing all the books in this series
while nursing giant margaritas.
Cheers!

We jointly dedicate this book
in memory
of our friend and colleague
Meg Groeling,
the founding member of ECW's
"Western Department."

Chris Heisey

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Editors' Note

Emerging Civil War serves as a public history-oriented platform for sharing original scholarship related to the American Civil War. The scholarship we present reflects the eclectic background, expertise, interests, and writing styles of our cadre of historians. We've shared that scholarship not only on the Emerging Civil War blog, but also in the pages of the Emerging Civil War Series published by Savas Beatie, in other general-audience and academic publications, at our annual Emerging Civil War Symposium at Stevenson Ridge, on our monthly podcasts, and even through social media.

Our Emerging Civil War 10th Anniversary Series captures and commemorates some of the highlights from our first ten years.

This compendium includes pieces originally published on our blog; podcast transcripts; and transcripts of talks given at the ECW Symposium. It also includes an assortment of original material. Previously published pieces have been updated and, in most cases, expanded and footnoted. Our attempt is to offer value-added rather than just reprint material available for free elsewhere.

Between the covers of this series, readers will find military, social, political, and economic history; memory studies; travelogues; personal narratives; essays; and photography. This broad range of scholarship and creative work is meant to provide readers with a diversity of perspectives. The combined collection of material is *not* intended to serve as a complete narrative of events or comprehensive overview. Rather, these are the stories and events our historians happened to be interested in writing about at any given time. In that way, the collection represents the sort of eclectic ongoing conversation you'll find on our blog.

As a collective, the individuals who comprise ECW are encouraged to share their own unique interests and approaches. The resulting work—and the respectful discussions that surround it—forward ECW's overall effort to promote a general awareness of the Civil War as America's defining event.

Another of ECW's organizational priorities is our ongoing work to identify and spotlight the next generation of "emerging" Civil War historians and the fresh ideas they bring to the historical conversation. (Some of us were "emerging" when ECW started up ten years ago and have perhaps since "emerged," but the quest to spotlight new voices continues!)

Most importantly, it is the common thread of public history and the ideals of interpretation that so strongly tie our seemingly disparate bodies of work together. America's defining event should not be consigned to forgotten footnotes and dusty shelves. As public historians, we understand the resonance and importance history's lessons can have in our modern world and in our daily lives, so we always seek to connect people with those great stories and invaluable lessons. Emerging Civil War remains committed to making our history something available for all of us—writers, readers, historians, hobbyists, men, women, young, old, and people of all races and ethnicities—and by doing so, making it something we can engage, question, challenge, and enjoy.

Please join us online at www.emergingcivilwar.com.

A Note About This Volume:

As we plotted out the Emerging Civil War 10th Anniversary Series, we identified a lot of excellent material that didn't necessarily fit into one of the themes we'd settled on. We still wanted an opportunity to showcase some of that work, though. This volume does just that.

It is *not* intended to be comprehensive. Like the Western Theater itself, there is too much territory to cover. ECW writers write about the topics they happen to be interested in at any given time, so this anthology is necessarily limited by that process of self-selection. Many fascinating stories at many favorite battles are not included simply because no one in our stable of contributors has opted to write about them yet.

Sherman's efforts through Georgia and the Carolinas are not included in this volume but will, instead, appear in a planned future volume. An additional forthcoming volume on the fall of 1862 will also touch on some of the actions not covered here.

Stories in this collection are organized in roughly chronological order. Beyond that, there's no narrative through-thread, so the book lends itself to either a front-to-back reading or to "sampling."

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, as editors, we'd like to thank our colleagues at Emerging Civil War, past and present. ECW has always been and remains a team effort. We've worked with some wonderful historians, writers, and "emerging voices" over the past decade, and we're proud to show off some of that work here.

Thanks, too, to Theodore Savas and his entire team at Savas Beatie, with a special thanks to our editorial liaison, Sarah Keeney, and production manager, Veronica Kane. Ted took a chance on ECW when we were still a young blog, accepting Kris White's pitch for the Emerging Civil War Series. That proved to be a game-changer for us. Together, ECW and Savas Beatie have produced some great work, and we're thankful to Ted for agreeing to help us celebrate ECW's tenth anniversary by allowing us to produce more great work. We thank everyone at Savas Beatie for all they do to support the work of Emerging Civil War.

Sarah Kay Bierle, as ECW's managing editor, manages the content on the blog on a daily basis. Her work made it a lot easier for us to collect the material we've assembled in this volume. Our official un-official archivist, Jon-Erik Gilot, has helped us make it easier to access our past work.

Cecily Nelson Zander, as our chief historian, provides overall quality control for our work. She joins a list of distinguished historians—Kristopher D. White, Christopher Kolakowski, and Dan Davis—who have served in that role. Our thanks to all of them over the years for ensuring a high bar for our writers in service to our readers.

Thanks to Patrick McCormick, who reviewed the text and made valuable suggestions and observations. And a big thank-you to Chris Heisey for always being willing to contribute *one more* photograph as the design of this book and this series, continued to evolve.

Finally, a special thanks to co-founders Chris Mackowski, Jake Struhelka, and Kristopher D. White, whose brainstorming over beers, cigars, and history led to ECW's creation. To quote Kris's wife, "Not too bad for three idiots sitting on a porch."

* * *

Sarah:

Sending thanks to Dan Davis, who taught me a lot about blog editing in my early days at ECW and who has remained a good friend and colleague through the years.

Much appreciation to the authors at Emerging Civil War who have kept content on the blog (who have "fed the beast," as we call it) for many years; it's a privilege to work with all of you!

Thank you to my parents, Shawn and Susan, for letting me follow my adventurous calling into the Eastern and Western Theaters of Civil War history. Finally, thank you to my brothers and sisters-in-law, Josiah & Lexis, Nathan & Katelyn, for always being just a phone call away and asking, "What are you writing now?"

Chris:

Being a guy from "the East," I am indebted to the many gracious and remarkable historians and preservationists who opened "the West" to me: Garry Adelman, Mike Bunn, Charlie Crawford, Dan Davis, Steve Davis, Jim Doncaster, Curt Fields, Rachel Finch, Will Greene, Todd Groce, Parker Hills, Eric Jacobson, Bob Jenkins, Gordon Jones, Jim Lewis, Jim Ogden, Dave Powell, Joe Ricci, Tim Smith, Greg Wade, Kris White, Lee White, Brian Wills, Terry Winschel, and Jim Woodrick. I've had wonderful battlefield adventures with all of them.

My thanks to my dean, Aaron Chimbel, for the support he constantly offers. I also thank the Jandoli School of Communication at St. Bonaventure University, as well as my colleagues in the university's Office of Marketing and Communications.

Finally, my thanks to my wife, Jenny Ann, and my children, Steph and her husband, Thomas (and my granddaughters, Sophie "the Pip," and Gracie); Jackson; and Maxwell James. Family is everything.

The Dead Angle at Kennesaw Mountain—which does not appear in this book. Tales from the Atlanta Campaign, the March to the Sea, and the Carolinas Campaign will appear in a planned future volume. *Chris Mackowski*

Western Theater—Space: the defining feature of the Western Theater. The vast geographic distances created a far different strategic and operational picture in the west than in the Eastern Theater. This map points out the locations of towns and sites mentioned by name in the stories collected for this volume. See Phill Greenwalt's final essay in the book for a rubber-meets-the-road exploration of this idea.

Foreword

by David A. Powell

Each of the American Civil War's three main theaters—East, West, and Trans-Mississippi—have a unique character. The Eastern Theater was the "Cockpit of War," a tightly confined space where the contending armies fought largely over the same Virginia terrain for four years. Even Confederate General Robert E. Lee's two northern forays to Antietam and Gettysburg traversed only small portions of Maryland and Pennsylvania in campaigns that ran for weeks, not months. Famously, the distance between the two opposing capitals was just one hundred miles. Within this space, both the Federals and Confederates raised very large armies. The Union routinely fielded forces topping 100,000 men, with many more tied up in support elements and garrison troops. And though Rebel numbers often fluctuated more dramatically, the Confederates did not lag far behind: during the Seven Days in 1862, Lee's force and supporting troops amounted to nearly 110,000 men, and at Fredericksburg, almost 90,000 troops filled his ranks. Had either side managed to achieve a truly decisive Napoleonic victory in Virginia that shattered the other's main force, the war might have ended quickly. Instead, stalemate resulted.

In the Trans-Mississippi, of course, the space was vast, but the troops far fewer. Texas alone encompassed nearly 270,000 square miles, making up more than one third of the whole Confederate land mass. But those states west of the Mississippi were also part of the expanding frontier, barely settled, lacking the infrastructure to support modern war on a large scale. Accordingly, an army of 20,000 men was a veritable horde. Battles were

waged with brigades and divisions, or very rarely, corps. Nothing like a truly war-ending battle was possible, given those conditions.

Which left the Western Theater—which in the Civil War meant that territory between the Appalachians and the Mississippi, south of the Ohio River. This region was also vastly larger than the East but, having been settled a generation earlier than the frontier states, it possessed the infrastructure to support large armies. A network of navigable rivers supported an enormous traffic in vessels of all kinds: most famously the grand steamboats of Samuel Clemens's childhood, but also barges, rafts, and other transport. In the decade before war erupted, railroads expanded rapidly, supplementing but not yet replacing that riverine traffic. Thus, on both water and land, the steam engine revolutionized the transportation industry—and warfare itself.

The four Confederate states comprising this region—Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee—were, along with Kentucky, critical agricultural and population centers vital to the Southern war effort. Both sides committed large numbers of troops to the theater, though given the space they needed to defend and control, those forces were always destined to be much more dispersed than in Virginia. Army strengths in the west rarely equaled their eastern counterparts, but they came close: field forces of 50,000 to 80,000 men were not uncommon, and large, bloody battles were frequent.

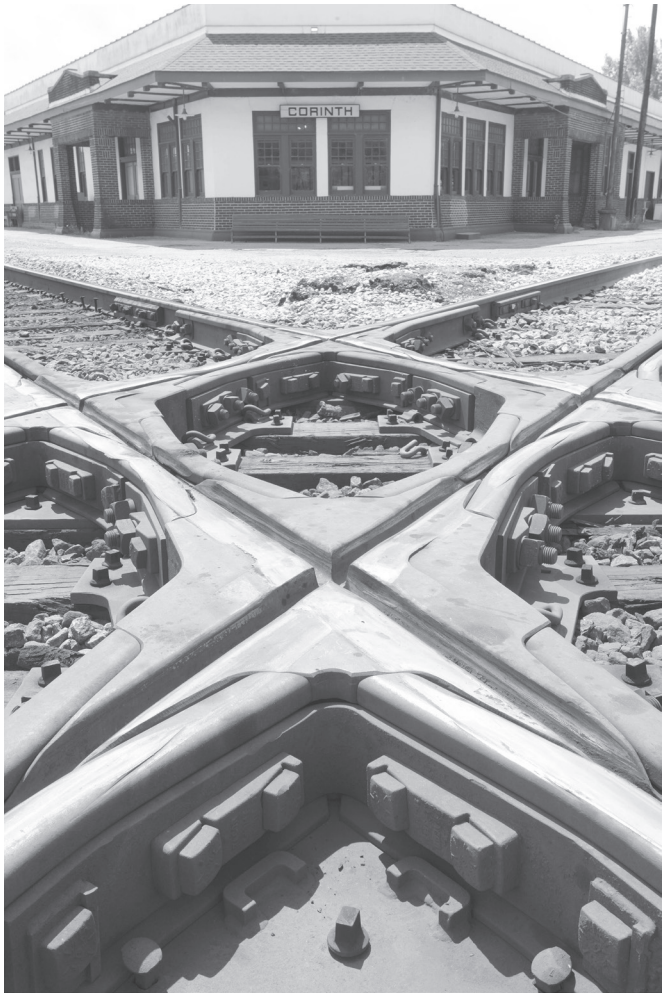
One argument holds that by depriving the Confederacy of these resources, the Federal government won the war in the West. Perhaps that is true; certainly, it is correct that the Armies of the Cumberland and the Tennessee achieved more measurable successes in 1862 and 1863 than did their eastern counterpart, the Army of the Potomac. By the end of 1863 virtually all of Tennessee as well as large swaths of Mississippi and Louisiana were in Federal hands, whereas in Virginia, the Rapidan and Rappahannock still defined the boundary between Lee and Meade. However, Lee's need to defend Virginia as well as his hard-hitting, offensive style of warfare required enormous resources in manpower, livestock, and materiel. If more of those resources, not to mention leadership, had been diverted to the west, would the outcome in that theater have been different? It is unreasonable to view the Western Theater in isolation, overlooking the sacrifices made in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. The war was not won or lost by a single battle, or in a single theater.

Historiography has not been so balanced. For many years, the Eastern Theater dominated the thoughts of historians. Books and articles covering

aspects of the war in Virginia far outnumber those documenting the western struggle. For example, while few of the men who commanded corps in the East on either side of the conflict lack modern full-length biographies, many, if not most, westerners do. Fortunately for our ongoing study of the war, that imbalance is changing, but there is still room for growth.

The following essays explore all facets of the war in the Western Theater, from Secession to surrender. Military, political, cultural, and socioeconomic aspects each get a nod. One important theme is the rise of western leaders, exemplified by Ulysses S. Grant, the last and by far most successful of a procession of Federal generals brought east to "win the war." Grant was the man who finally succeeded. Conversely, some name-brand easterners—James Longstreet and John Bell Hood, to name just two—discovered that waging war on the far side of the Appalachians was considerably more complicated than doing so in Virginia. Their reputations were diminished rather than enhanced as a result. It is no accident that perennial punching-bag Braxton Bragg appears more than once; Bragg had one of the longest tenures in command of any army of the war, leading the Army of Tennessee from June of 1862 until the beginning of December the following year—18 months, the second-longest tenure of any army commander on either side behind only Lee. As such, he is a central player in the western drama, for much of the Confederate west fell into Federal hands on Bragg's watch.

In keeping with that effort to expand our knowledge of the theater, the essays included here demonstrate the breadth and scope of Emerging Civil War's coverage. We at ECW hope that they shine additional light on the events described, inducing readers to take Horace Greeley's advice and "go west."



Above: The crossroads at Corinth *Chris Heisey*

xxvi-xxvii: Water Oaks Pond at Shiloh *Chris Heisey*

xxviii-xxix: Overlooking the Yazoo Bypass Canal and original bend of the Mississippi River from the bluffs north of Vicksburg *Chris Heisey*

xxx-xxxxi: McGavock Cemetery at Franklin *Chris Heisey*

xxxii: State capitols in Montgomery, Alabama (top) and Nashville, Tennessee (bottom) *Chris Heisey*

1. Photographing the Western Theater

by Chris Heisey

Given I live at the apex of the triangle of the great Eastern Theater battlefields of Manassas, Antietam, and Gettysburg, my 50 years of studying the Civil War always seems to favor these rich places where, historic lore has it, the war was won and lost. Truth be told, the Civil War was lost in the Western Theater, where the Confederacy could ill-afford to lose the vast core of territory. That region—consisting of the first states to choose to leave the Union early in 1861—was the heart of the South, where its most rabid Secessionists made their wealth.

While I still find true solace in photographing the heavily monumented hallowed grounds near our nation's capital, my most cherished memories and experiences, so seared into my photographic conscience, remain my excursions to battlefields deep in the heart of Dixie—battlefields like Shiloh, Stones River, Fort Donelson, Chickamauga, and the many parcels of Civil War battlefields that surround the megalopolis of Atlanta and southeast, where the tentacles of the Union armies crippled the Confederacy's belief that it could obtain a negotiated peace.

In Richard McMurray's thoroughly thought-provoking book *The Fourth Battle of Winchester: Toward a New Paradigm*, Dr. McMurry posits an entertaining counterfactual history to poke fun at how Civil War historians have been blatantly Eastern-centric in their answers to the great question: Why did the Confederacy lose the Civil War? Never of course did the fourth Battle of Winchester occur, and the mere title politely lampoons those who believe the war's outcome rested in the east.

"The western paradigm shows us at a glance the reason for Confederate defeat. The matter is brutally simple," McMurray points out. "The secessionists lost the war because they lost the key battles." More specifically, the Confederacy lost because it lost the key campaigns in the west: Shiloh, Perryville, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, and ultimately Atlanta. Gone were the resources of the southern frontier as the conquest by Union armies led to a military occupation that crippled the Confederacy's heartland. Wars are most commonly won by fighting—no matter the historical contortions to prove otherwise. The fight was lost, not won, out west.

That makes visiting our great Western Theater battlefields all the more enriching. Stand high atop the bluffs at Vicksburg as pummeling summer rains quell the boil of Deep South summer heat. It is easy to see that the Confederacy simply could not afford to lose the Mississippi River and still supply its armies and populace. Losing at Shiloh cost the Confederates any hope at holding Tennessee. The loss of Chattanooga ultimately gave Sherman's army the conduit to Atlanta, then Savannah, while spreading destruction along the way.

Shiloh remains my favorite battlefield because it just feels like 1862. Fog there dances as to remind one of the unseen spiritual world that flits about suddenly seen. At Shiloh, you can see it, and it's a memorable experience no matter the season. There is a quiet at Shiloh not matched at any other Civil War battlefield I have photographed. Yet, stand at the Hornet's Nest in the center of the battlefield on an early April pre-dawn, and it is quite easy to picture the guns booming and the bedlam of combat that many a soldier clad in blue and gray experienced as their first terror-filled hours of combat. That some 24,000 wounded and killed fell there sobers me. The mass burial trenches of Confederate dead that dot the hallowed landscape there in the nook of southwestern Tennessee is enough to give you the chills even on a very warm spring afternoon.

One of my favorite haunts is the old Sheldon Church near Beaufort, South Carolina. Resting neatly in the Spanish moss-draped live oaks of the southern coastal plains of the Palmetto State, this church—now in ruins—is a photographer's paradise. Shadow and light fight each other amidst the oaks. Stately columns and humble graves offer the camera ample, daylong opportunities to capture images that speak. Images that say something rather than just show something is my main pursuit, and it's a battle sometimes to accomplish the "saying" part. Photography looks easy until you do the

The ruins of Sheldon Church, Beaufort, South Carolina *Chris Heisey*

looking in the viewfinder. A respected photographer said to me a few years ago that it took 150 years of photography to produce a trillion images; now, almost a trillion are taken worldwide daily.

Burned by the British armies in 1779, then rebuilt only to be burned again by Sherman's hordes, this peaceful, divinely rich place is surrounded by old unmarked graves of long dead who have become sadly obscure to our collective American memory. Yet, the whispers of history still to be heard there in the beauty tell me this is where the Confederacy lost the war. No, there was no battle there, yet battles lost on far-off fields—where hard fighting, steep casualties, and the loss of huge tracts of the southern heartland—are why this church stands as a metaphor for why the Confederacy died in ruin.

So, too, did the British in the American Revolution envision a "southern strategy" meant to cripple the colonists' will to fight. Never, however, could the British win enough fights or inflict enough losses in the southern battles to destroy the militias and Continental fighters hell-bent on winning independence. Their burning of Sheldon Church was far different than Sherman's burning. The difference, it appears to me, was in the fight.

1. East vs. West

by Chris Kolakowski and Chris Mackowski

This is an edited transcript of an Emerging Civil War Podcast episode that dropped on August 3, 2018.

Chris M: Welcome to The Emerging Civil War Podcast. I'm Chris Mackowski.

Chris K: And I'm Chris Kolakowski. And today: "East versus West."

Chris M: Everyone seems to pay attention to the war in Virginia. . . .

Chris K: But outside the Old Dominion, a *whole* bunch of stuff happened, too.

Chris M: Where was the war really won? We'll explore that question today on The Emerging Civil War podcast.

* * *

Chris M: So, we're here to talk East versus West. And, first of all, I sort of had this set up as a binary, an either or. . . .

Chris K: Is it an "either/or"? I think it's both. It's not one or the other for me.

Chris M: Why is it both?

Chris K: From a political standpoint, the Eastern Theater is the most important. It's what everybody watches, and where the two capitals, Washington and Richmond, are. The two largest armies—the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia—are there, and it's a scene of some of the largest battles in American military history until the twentieth century. However, from a military standpoint, the West is far more important, in terms of resources, scale, and scope.

For example, the international aspect of blocking off Confederate port cities in the West, the taking of New Orleans, and the cutting of the Mississippi River—from a military standpoint, the argument can be made that the Confederacy loses the war in the West.

Chris M: Jim Ogden, the legendary historian at Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, really opened that idea up for me. He said, "This is where the war was really won." And that was a real gestalt shift for me to start thinking about it in those terms. I one hundred percent believe that's true, and Jim is right.

Chris K: Yeah, I think he's right. If you look at what the East does. . . . Let me put it to you this way: the Confederacy needs to win in the East to win the war. If you look at how the Confederacy can win the war, either through recognition from Britain and France, or from Northern political war weariness frustrating the reelection of Abraham Lincoln in 1864, from a political standpoint, what is the most important area for that? It's Virginia. The North can afford to not win, as long as they don't lose in the East.

Chris M: On a strategic level, they can't lose—because, of course, they rack up loss after loss.

Chris K: They rack up loss after loss, but they always win just enough that Lee is always looking for one more Second Manassas or one more Chancellorsville. He never quite finds it. Whereas in the West, first of all, the North wins most of the campaigns, which is essential to what they're trying

to do. You can hold in the East and basically fight back and forth between Washington and Richmond, and it's a stalemate. However, win in the West and you win the war. If you're the Confederacy, you can win everything in the East and lose everything in the West, and you lose the war.

Chris M: Right. I think, just in terms of real estate, you've got that 120-mile stretch between D.C. and Richmond where much of the war shifts back and forth. However, out in the West, we're talking vast tracts of land. Whole states are won and lost, and just the amount of geography the armies have to cover out there is mind-boggling.

Chris K: Well, let me give you three examples, because that's one of the things about the West: the scope is much bigger and broader. Perryville, for example, in Kentucky was the battle for Kentucky. Whoever won that battle was basically going to get the state; they were battling for control of Kentucky.

Chris M: And as Kentucky goes, so goes the Union.

Chris K: Exactly. Then there's Middle Tennessee. Control of Middle Tennessee was contested at Stone's River. That was a third of Tennessee that was decided for Union control at the end of 1862 and the first few days of January 1863.

Finally, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, and Knoxville, they collectively pull East Tennessee into the Union, so the scope is immense.

The other thing about the West—and this is somewhat forgotten—is that you may have multiple armies maneuvering independently or maneuvering in a coordinated fashion, and they're a hundred to one hundred and fifty miles apart. But they're performing the same campaigns, they're supporting each other. For example, the Confederate Kentucky invasion where you have an army moving up from Knoxville and another one moving up from Chattanooga. The scope in the West is just fundamentally different than the East.

Chris M: I think about Grant's Overland Campaign, where he's going move his army across the Rapidan and pursue Lee. While he does that, he's

going to send Butler up the James, and he's going to send Sigel down the Valley—but that sort of coordination's been going on in the West for quite some time.

Chris K: Right. That's a Western-style strategy. You're looking at the big picture. What Grant is doing is he's having come from the West where he fought in campaigns—Tennessee River campaigns, Mississippi River campaigns—where he'd learned to look at maneuvering multiple armies toward a common objective. He has to look at the whole state of Virginia as a theater, not just "the Army of the Potomac versus the Army of Northern Virginia" and everybody else as a bunch of bit players that we don't really need to worry about, which his predecessors in the East had done. Grant shows up and says, "We're going maneuver everybody together and put the pressure on and see what we can do."

Chris M: He has a tremendous learning curve that he has to come to that knowledge through. I mean, he's has to work with the navy out west; he needs work with the Army of the Ohio, and later, the Army of the Cumberland. It's not like he wakes up early in the war and says, "Hey, here's what we're going do." He must come to that realization.

Chris K: That's correct. Actually, I'm glad you brought the navy up. The other thing people forget is that Grant, when he comes across the Rapidan River into the Wilderness, takes up the bridge. He abandons his land communications from that direction, toward the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and through central Virginia. Instead, he realizes what an asset it is that the United States Navy controls the Chesapeake Bay and most Virginia rivers up to the navigable portions. There are exceptions, the James River being the most noted, as you approach Richmond. But he understands that "I don't need the railroad, I can use the navy and shift my supply base to the rivers as I maneuver closer to Richmond and, ultimately, City Point at Petersburg."

Chris M: Of course, when he does that, he does not get the same response George McClellan had in 1862 on the Peninsula, who was "shifting his base." He was essentially trying to do the same thing, using the Union control of the rivers to shift his base, but he took a lot of flak.

Chris K: Well, that's true. But the thing is that McClellan was also retreating to the base, not fighting the active, aggressive campaign that Grant is. Grant is hammering it home and not letting Lee have the initiative, whereas what you're talking about during the Seven Days campaign in June and early July of 1862, Lee has the initiative. Lee actually is forcing that change of base in some ways.

Chris M: Right, right.

Chris K: That's a huge difference. But there's no question McClellan is definitely helped by the fact that the navy controls the James and the York to that point. Otherwise, he'd have been in real trouble.

Chris M: One of the key insights I really find important, was that when the war broke out, and the Confederacy is assigning its generals, its senior-most guy, Samuel Cooper, stays in the War Department. The number-two guy, Albert Sidney Johnston, then gets sent West. So, if you think about it from a Confederate point of view, what did they see as the key area? They're sending their best guy west.

Chris K: Don't forget where Jeff Davis is from.

Chris M: Right.

Chris K: He's from Mississippi, and understands the breadth of that theater. Davis and his family had an estate near Vicksburg, a major Mississippi River port, for decades. He understands what's out there, and understands what needs to be done.

You can get a sense, if you study the West and the Confederate struggle for how to manage the war there, that's one of the things they're attempting. They're trying to conquer that space: "How can we shift our resources between middle Tennessee and Mississippi to both keep the river open and stop the Federals from advancing south from Nashville?" They never quite figure it out, but Jeff Davis continually drives those discussions because he understands—from having lived out there and having traveled back and

forth to Washington, D.C. when he was a U.S. senator and a high official in various U.S. administrations—what needs to be done. He can feel it in his bones because he's experienced it.

Chris M: But Johnston thought it was completely indefensible. He had to spread his few available troops out over such a distance that he said they couldn't support each other.

Chris K: And that's the problem. Albert Sidney Johnston has too few forces, and too long a line. But the other problem is that he is forced by a variety of concerns, some political from President Davis himself, to adopt a positional defense as opposed to a more mobile defense. You see the Confederates try and do that later, where they have Bragg's army in Tennessee in 1863 and Pemberton's army at Vicksburg, and they try to shift reserves back and forth. The trouble is they never work out the timing.

However, in 1861, they're still trying to figure that out, and it's a positional defense where he's got armies in Western Kentucky and Western Tennessee, and the middle part of Kentucky and the middle part of Tennessee covering Nashville. But on the eastern part on that line at Mill Springs, Kentucky, Federals defeat one of those Confederate armies—they crack the defensive line—and the Confederates are pushed all the way back to Northern Mississippi.

Chris M: Johnston's finally able to consolidate in Corinth, Mississippi, and then he makes that push aggressively toward Shiloh.

Chris K: Right.

Chris M: But then he's over-aggressive on the battlefield. It leads to his death. But finally, he's got that consolidation he'd hoped for. Maybe he overplayed his hand. He's overconfident.

Chris K: I think that's absolutely right. Johnston's strategy of concentrating at Corinth, going to Shiloh, trying to defeat one of the two major Federal armies in West Tennessee—Buell's Army of the Ohio is coming, and, of

course, Grant's army of the Tennessee is at Pittsburg Landing—is sound, very sound. Tactically, there's a lot of issues with the conduct of the battle. The biggest thing about Albert Sidney Johnston is he forgets what he's there for. He forgets that he's a strategic leader and becomes a tactical leader. Ultimately, it costs him his life.

I will say this in defense of General Johnston, and of all these early Civil War commanders: what is the largest army an American officer has commanded before 1861?

Chris M: As Winfield Scott is marching through Mexico?

Chris K: He has 15,000 in Mexico, but it's not that one. It's 17,000 in Yorktown. And that is the size of the army corps in the Civil War.

Chris M: Right, right.

Chris K: That's one of the points that needs to be remembered about all this: these guys are doing this—

Chris M: They're making it up as they go.

Chris K: They're making it up as they go. Albert Sidney Johnston, before 1862, or really, the latter part of 1861—his largest command was the Mormon Expedition. That was just a few thousand in 1858-1859. So, you go from that to commanding a large army at Shiloh, and you begin to realize that Johnston falls back on . . .

Chris M: . . . on what he knows.

Chris K: The old frontier-style, personal leadership. Get out there, leaving P. G. T. Beauregard to run headquarters but let me get out there and inspire the troops. That may work in a small expedition into Utah, but when you're commanding the second-largest Confederate Army, on the fields that you have to win, it's a different matter.

Chris M: Yeah.

Chris K: I give him something of a pass because, he's fighting on a scale that nobody's seen before.

Chris M: He has no playbook to fall back on.

Chris K: Exactly.

Chris M: I think of Irvin McDowell when he leads that army toward Manassas in July 1861. He immediately becomes the most experienced commander in the history of the United States Army.

Chris K: Just by marching out to Centerville.

Chris M: And he's like, "Oh, we're green." Of course, Lincoln famously says, "We're all green. Go on out there and do something." No playbook to fall back on whatsoever.

Chris K: Right. They've done this in Europe, which people have studied. Of course, famously, George McClellan had been part of the observer team to the Crimean War in the 1850s. But it's one thing to observe; it's another thing to do.

Chris M: You touched on a point a second ago that I want to come back to because, again, when we think of East–West, certainly in the East, we think of the Army of the Potomac. In the West, though, there are two major armies and several smaller armies.

Chris K: Correct.

Chris M: We sort of lump it together as "the West." But the armies out there have very different characteristics and objectives.

Chris K: That's absolutely right. Actually, I would include the Trans-Mississippi in this.

Chris M: Yeah, we haven't even really touched that. "Trans-Mississippi? What's that?" But that's another, even larger expanse of land.

Chris K: Exactly. In the West between the Mississippi River and the Appalachian Mountains, you have three major Federal armies. Particularly in 1863, you have the Army of the Cumberland in the center advancing from Louisville through Nashville to Chattanooga. The Army of the Cumberland was originally known as the Army of the Ohio, and it's renamed; there's also an army in Eastern Kentucky that advances into East Tennessee that's later known as the Army of the Ohio. Then, of course, you have Grant's Army of the Tennessee, going from Donelson, Shiloh, Memphis, and down the Mississippi River to Vicksburg.

Let's not forget we have the Department of the Gulf, the guys coming up from New Orleans, and Nathaniel Banks takes Port Hudson just a few days after Vicksburg falls. So, actually, that's four.

Four Federal armies right there. If you add the fifth, Samuel Curtis's guys out in—at this point—Northern Arkansas advancing down from Missouri. That's five.

Chris M: I suppose, in the East, we can start talking about the Army of Virginia, you know, Pope's force. We talk about the different forces in and out of the Valley under various commands and names, and eventually Butler's Army of the James. We have other forces out there, too, but everyone seems to fall back on the Army of the Potomac. A fantastic army. What do you like about that army?

Chris K: The Army of the Potomac is a fine group of fighting men, and they fight very well. They are tenacious, which they prove on many battlefields. Leadership is somewhat erratic until later in the war.

I actually think, in some ways, the Army of the Potomac's finest campaign, which proves what that army is truly capable of doing, is the drive to Appomattox and running down the Army of Northern Virginia in the last eight days of the war. I think the way they're able to move and engage, and

the leaders that have come up through the crucible of fire in the last three, four years—it's an army at the peak of its powers.

Chris M: That's a very different Army of the Potomac than the one that Grant inherits in early 1864. When Grant first gets there, the army is big and cumbersome and doesn't move like his lean, mean fast-moving westerners.

Chris K: Correct. By the way, his army at Vicksburg was forty percent the size of the Army of the Potomac. When they come to Chattanooga, they're 24,000, which is smaller than the Army of the Potomac's II Corps. The Army of the Cumberland at Chattanooga—George Thomas's force—is 56,000 strong. That's what—half the size of the Army of the Potomac?

So, when Grant gets to the Army of the Potomac, it is maneuvering in a way he hasn't seen before.

Chris M: So, I think by the time of the Appomattox Campaign, they're finally behaving in a way that he's used to—but look how long it took him to get them to that point.

Chris K: That's true. I think part of it, too, is the troops, because remember, one of the salient characteristics of the Federal armies in early 1864. When did most of those guys sign up? How long did they sign up for? They signed up in the spring and summer of 1861 for three years or the war, whichever comes first. You've got about a third of that army that chooses not to take the re-enlistment bounty. They have "short-timer's disease"—there's no other way to say it.

That impacts the combat power of that army. Plus, the repeated battlefield losses as the campaign continues. I mean, they get the job done, but that sword gets duller the more Grant hacks at Lee's army.

Chris M: He also has to cycle through several corps and division commanders to finally get some of the right guys in the right places, too.

Chris K: That's the thing: that leadership flux is tough. Once you get

down to it, it's the instability in that army and in the leadership at those key levels. But once you get to Petersburg, the organizational waters are smooth out a little bit.

You've got people that have survived the crucible like Nelson Miles, who comes down and becomes an absolutely outstanding commander at Petersburg and Appomattox—and goes on to become the General in Chief of the U. S. Army during the Spanish-American War.

You get guys like that that have risen up, and they're able to learn their craft at Petersburg and become more proficient, so by the time that they leave the Petersburg trenches, that army, you're right, is a whole new fighting machine than it was even a year earlier.

Chris M: In the meantime, as Grant's affecting that transformation in the East, out West, Sherman is doing some very innovative things as he's moving through Georgia. Again, much smaller armies, but the organization is much different than what we've seen before.

Chris K: It is. Multiple independent armies in a campaign or a field of battle, which, before Sherman leaves Chattanooga, only two other Americans had ever done: Grant at Chattanooga and Lee at the Seven Days in front of Richmond. So, what you've got is three independent armies: McPherson's Army of the Tennessee, Thomas's Army of the Cumberland, and John Schofield's Army of the Ohio. How do you maneuver those? How do you work those?

It's an interesting contrast where you look at how Sherman uses his two smaller armies, Ohio and Tennessee, to move and lure, and then the hammer blows come from the big Army of the Cumberland, which is over half of his army. But the way he maneuvers and uses the roads in north Georgia is a interesting study.

Chris M: Pretty innovative and amazing stuff.

Chris K: Very much.

Chris M: It's funny, because, you know, we set this up as East versus West. I think we're talking as much "early" versus "late" war as we are East versus West as we talk about this evolution. Let me go back to East versus West for a second. Why do you think people tend to focus more on the East today?

Chris K: That is a complicated question, and I think it has two parts. I'll simplify my answer because we only have a limited amount of time. First of all, is Lost Cause mythology. The Lost Cause focused the war on the Army of Northern Virginia.

The other thing is that—particularly from a Confederate perspective—those guys in the West just are not that good. I mean, Braxton Bragg, Leonidas Polk . . . the infighting in the high command of the Army of Tennessee and the wasted valor of the Army of the Tennessee—that makes those guys in the Army of the Potomac look like they were holding hands all the time and singing "Kumbaya."

But even in the West, it's a different style, it's a different type of officer. You've got troops that have a different literacy and education level—generally, not all. You've got a significant number of West Pointers out in both armies, but you've got far smaller percentages in both western armies than you do in the East. Richard McMurray wrote a great book years ago, *Two Great Rebel Armies*, where he compared and contrasted the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of Tennessee. One of the things he talked about is the Army of Northern Virginia—between VMI, The Citadel and West Point—I think it was two-thirds of the officer corps had some professional military education. In the West, it was twenty-four percent. That alone makes a huge difference.

Chris M: The Army of the Tennessee, a great army, just had terrible leadership. I feel bad for those guys who did some tough fighting.

Chris K: They do.

Chris M: Yet, just never have the leadership to really push them over the finish line.

Chris K: That's exactly right. If you look at the battles between the Army of the Tennessee and the Army of the Cumberland, all through the war—basically from Perryville to Franklin—Confederates repeatedly pushed that Federal Army to the brink of destruction more than once. But because of mismanagement on the senior leadership side, Confederates are never quite able to finish the job. In some ways, that's actually something that the Army of Northern Virginia, for all of its dramatic battles against Union forces in the East, never quite gets. The closest near-death experience for the Army of the Potomac is July 2, 1863.

Chris M: Yeah.

Chris K: But the Army of the Cumberland has Perryville, which is really a third of the army, but the entire army faces it at Stones River. The entire army faces it again at Chickamauga. The entire army faces it once more during the battles for Atlanta. The Army of the Tennessee, as well, almost gets pushed to the brink on the 22nd of July 1864.

So, there's something there. Those guys were tough. But, again, the leadership threw a lot of it away.

Chris M: You mention the literacy level of the armies in the East versus in the West. That ties back to one of the reasons you think the East receives more primacy when we think of the Civil War.

Chris K: Writings. Those guys in the East wrote. They were very educated, and they were close to the northern media centers. We have photographs. You just don't have the photographs, contemporary photographs, in the West like you do in the East. You have some, but it's not like a couple of days after the battle there are photographers going out like they do at Antietam, Gettysburg, or places like that. You don't necessarily have a sketch artist like Alfred Waud there. Again, closeness to the northern media centers.

Chris M: I think that that has been an important carry-over because media centers also tie into population centers. So, after the war, you've got these huge population centers and veterans coming from Philadelphia, New

York, and Baltimore, and they're able to get to these eastern battlefields a lot easier than folks can get to western battlefields.

That tradition carries on and carries on and carries on. It's much easier for people in these eastern population centers to get to the eastern battlefields.

Chris K: That's correct. I agree with that. I absolutely do.

Chris M: But there's so much to explore out West.

Chris K: Absolutely. Traveling through the West provides an interesting perspective. I've always told people: If you study only one of the two theaters, it's like being a baseball fan of the American League, not the National League. You need to know what's going on with both, because then you see the whole picture. It'd be like World War II, where you just study Europe, and you forget that there's a whole war out in the Pacific, or vice versa. Because they interacted with each other, they acted upon each other, and if you don't give that due consideration, some of the things, some leadership decisions, some perspectives that these people have, you just miss. To round out your perspective of the Civil War, you need to look at East and West.

Chris M: Of course, I'm sure there are people out there saying, "What about the Trans-Mississippi?" Which also plays into it.

Chris K: That's a whole other podcast for another time.

Chris M: Thank you for joining us for The Emerging Civil War Podcast. We'll see you online—and on the battlefield.